

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LIBREV 00682 191250Z
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9063

INFO AMEMBASSY BISSAU

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 0682

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP PFOR GB EK TP LY

SUBJECT: SAO TOME DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMARY: GSTP HAS REPORTEDLY AGREED TO EXCHANGE AMBASSADORS WITH LIBYA AND GOTTEN INVOLVED IN MURKY AFFAIR OF POSSIBLE GUN RUNNING. GABONESE REACTIONS TO SEEMING GSTP LEFTWARD DRIFT SUGGEST EARLY HONEYMOON BETWEEN THESE NEIGHBORS HAS COME TO ITS END. END SUMMARY.

1. LIBREVILLE MEDIA MARCH 15 CARRIED SHORT ARNA REPORT OF GSTP PRIMIN TROVOADAS VISIT TO LIBYA FOLLOWING CAIRO AFRAO- ARAB SUMMIT. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE, TROVOADA WAS RECEIVED BY QADHAFI AND TWO LEADERS REACHED DECISION TO EXCHANGE AMBASSADORS AND TO TAKE CONCRETE MEASURES TO DEVELOP POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES.

2. GOVT MINISTRY OF INFORMATION RELEASED COMMUNIQUE SAME DAY REPORTING SEIZURE OF SAO TOMEAN BOAT MARCH 8 OFF SMALL GABONESE ISLAND OF MBAGNE, LOCATED IN CORISCO BAY

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ROUGHLY BETWEEN GABON AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA. COMMUNIQUE NOTES THAT STP CREW CLAIMED THEY WERE ON MEDEVAC MISSION TO PRINCIPE BUT GOT LOST IN FOG, RAN OUT OF GAS AND ENDED UP IN GABONESE WATERS. HOWEVER, COMMUNIQUE NOTES, BOAT WAS MANNED BY SIX MILITARY PERSONNEL IN COMBAT DRESS AND CONTAINED AUTOMATIC RIFLES AND "IMPORTANT" QUANTITY OF MUNITIONS, SEEMINGLY EXCESSIVE FOR DECLARED

PURPOSE OF EVACUATING SINGLE PATIENT.

3. COMMENT: WHILE APPEARANCE OF THESE TWO ITEMS ON SAME DAY WAS PROBABLY ONLY COINCIDENCE, GABONESE DO SEEM INCREASINGLY DISILLUSIONED WITH WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE LEFTWARD DRIFT OF GSTP. GOG MADE CONCERTED EFFORT FOLLOWING GSTP INDEPENDENCE TO WOO ITS NEIGHBOR (MANY OF WHOSE LEADERS HAD SPENT EXILE YEARS IN LIBREVILLE) WITH FLATTERY AND AID PROGRAMS IN EVIDENT HOPE OF DETACHING GSTP FROM ADHERENCE TO ANGOLA/MOZAMBIQUE POLICY POSITIONS. HOWEVER, GSTP VOTING PATTERN IN INTERNATIONAL FORA AND INCREASING RELIANCE ON COMMUNIST NATIONS FOR AID HAVE CLEARLY DISAPPOINTED GOG HOPES, AND GABONESE OFFICIALS HAVE COMPLAINED PRIVATELY ABOUT THEIR INABILITY TO INFLUENCE GSTP IN DESIRED DIRECTIONS.

4. GSTP DECISION TO EXCHANGE AMBASSADORS WITH LIBYA WILL CERTAINLY DO NOTHING TO ASSUAGE GOG CONCERNS. GSTP CURRENTLY HAS ONLY ONE AMBASSADOR ABROAD (ACCREDITED BOTH TO UN AND TO PORTUGAL) AND NO NATURAL LINKS WITH LIBYA, SO DECISION PRESUMABLY WAS PROMPTED BY QADHAFI OFFER OF LARGESSE WHICH IMPLIES LIKELY COROLLARY OF INCREASED LARGE INFLUENCE IN STP. THUS, PUBLICATION BY GOG OF COMMUNIQUE CONCERNING SEEING GSTP INVOLVEMENT IN DUBIOUS ENTERPRISE SUGGESTS AT VERY LEAST THAT GABONESE ARE NOW WILLING TO LET THEIR UNHAPPINESS WITH GSTP SHOW IN PUBLIC.

5. GOG GOT DOUBLE MILEAGE FROM COMMUNIQUE, HOWEVER, BY
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USING IT TO TAKE BACK HANDED SWIP AT BENIN ACCUSATIONS CONCERNING JANUARY MERCENARY RAID ON COTONOU. GOG COMMUNIQUE NOTED THAT SOME COUNTIRES MIGHT LINK SAO TOMEAN BOAT TO "ARMED IMPERIALISTIC AGGRESSION" BUT CONCLUDED THAT STRONG GABON HAD NO NEED "TO DIVERT ATTENTION OF GABONESE WITH FABRICATION OF THIS SORT"-- CLEAR SUGGESTION THAT GPRB ACCUSATIONS WERE NOTHING MORE THAN TALE FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION. STEIGMAN

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